DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 203 TM 032 313

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| TITLE | Educational Attainment. Indicator of the Month. |
| INSTITUTION | National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC. |
| REPORT NO | NCES-2000-010 |
| PUB DATE | 2000-07-00 |
| NOTE | 4p. |
| PUB TYPE | Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Black Students; *College Graduates; *Educational Attainment; Elementary Secondary Education; *High School Graduates; Higher Education; Hispanic Americans; *Minority Groups; Sex Differences; Young Adults |
| IDENTIFIERS | Fact Sheets |

ABSTRACT

This fact sheet presents data about educational attainment in the United States. The educational attainment of people aged 25 to 29 years increased between 1971 and 1998, and the percentage with a high school diploma or equivalency certificate rose from 78 to 88%. The percentage of high school completers with some college rose from 44% to 66%, and the percentage of high school completers with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 22% to 31%. The educational attainment of blacks in the same age group increased across all education levels between 1971 and 1998 as the rates for high school completion became more similar for blacks and whites. The educational attainment of Hispanics in this age group also increased, but despite these increases, the gaps in attainment between Hispanics and Whites remained similar at every attainment level during the period. Between 1971 and 1998, the educational attainment of females increased at a faster rate than that of males, and by 1998, the attainment rate of females surpassed that of their male peers. (SLD)

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# INDICATOR OF THE MONTH

National Center for Education Statistics

# Educational Attainment

ED 449 203

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INDICATOR OF THE MONTH

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

# Educational attainment

July 2000

*Changes in educational attainment over time indicate fluctuations in the demand for skills and knowledge in the work force as well as societal changes. An increase in the overall level of educational attainment can reflect the increasing emphasis society places on completing high school and college. Completing high school or college is an important educational accomplishment that yields many benefits, such as better job opportunities and higher earnings.*

- The educational attainment of 25- to 29-year-olds increased between 1971 and 1998. The percentage with a high school diploma or equivalency certificate rose from 78 to 88 percent; the percentage of high school completers with some college rose from 44 to 66 percent; and the percentage of high school completers with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 22 to 31 percent.
- The educational attainment of blacks ages 25–29 increased across all education levels between 1971 and 1998. During this period, the rates of high school completion became more similar for blacks and whites. In 1971, blacks ages 25–29 completed high school at a rate that was 72 percent of the rate of whites, while in 1998 the high school completion rate for blacks was 94 percent of the rate of whites. In contrast, the gaps in attainment between white and black high school completers with some college remained about the same, and the gap for those with a bachelor's degree or higher widened.
- The educational attainment of Hispanics ages 25–29 increased across all levels between 1971 and 1998. However, despite these increases, the gaps in attainment between Hispanics and whites remained similar at every attainment level during this period.
- In 1971, females ages 25–29 had lower rates of attainment at every education level than their male peers. However, between 1971 and 1998, the educational attainment of females increased at a faster rate than that of males, and by 1998, the attainment rate of females surpassed that of their male peers.

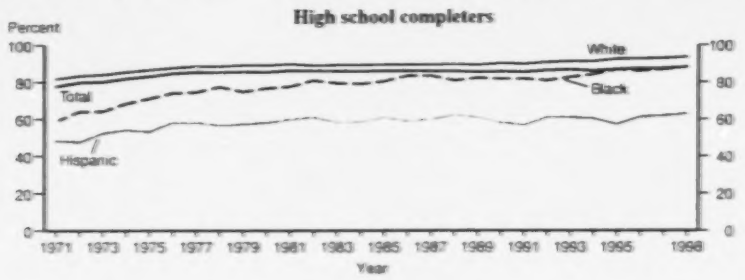
**Percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds who completed high school and percentage of high school completers with some college or a bachelor's degree or higher, by race–ethnicity: March 1971–98**

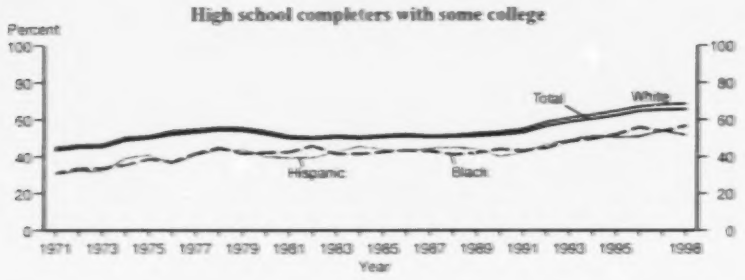
| | High school completers with: | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Diploma or equivalency certificate | | | | Some college | | | | Bachelor's degree or higher | | | |
| March | Total | White | Black | Hispanic | Total | White | Black | Hispanic | Total | White | Black | Hispanic |
| 1971 | 77.7 | 81.7 | 58.8 | 68.3 | 43.6 | 44.9 | 30.9 | 30.6 | 22.0 | 23.1 | 11.5 | 10.5 |
| 1973 | 80.2 | 84.0 | 64.1 | 52.3 | 45.3 | 46.6 | 33.5 | 31.6 | 23.6 | 24.8 | 12.7 | 10.8 |
| 1975 | 83.1 | 86.6 | 71.1 | 53.1 | 50.1 | 51.2 | 38.7 | 41.1 | 26.3 | 27.5 | 14.7 | 16.6 |
| 1977 | 85.4 | 88.6 | 74.5 | 58.0 | 53.2 | 54.8 | 41.7 | 41.1 | 28.1 | 29.8 | 16.9 | 11.5 |
| 1979 | 85.6 | 89.2 | 74.7 | 57.1 | 54.1 | 55.7 | 41.7 | 44.0 | 27.0 | 28.6 | 16.6 | 12.9 |
| 1981 | 86.3 | 89.8 | 77.6 | 59.8 | 50.1 | 51.2 | 42.5 | 39.6 | 24.7 | 26.3 | 14.9 | 12.5 |
| 1983 | 86.0 | 89.3 | 79.5 | 58.4 | 50.6 | 51.6 | 41.6 | 42.9 | 26.2 | 27.4 | 16.2 | 17.8 |
| 1985 | 86.2 | 89.5 | 80.5 | 61.0 | 50.8 | 51.8 | 42.7 | 44.2 | 25.7 | 27.3 | 14.4 | 18.2 |
| 1987 | 86.0 | 89.4 | 83.5 | 59.8 | 50.7 | 51.4 | 43.0 | 44.6 | 25.6 | 27.6 | 13.8 | 14.5 |
| 1989 | 85.5 | 89.3 | 82.3 | 61.0 | 51.3 | 52.8 | 42.1 | 44.3 | 27.3 | 29.5 | 15.4 | 16.5 |
| 1991 | 85.4 | 89.8 | 81.8 | 56.7 | 53.1 | 54.9 | 43.2 | 42.2 | 27.2 | 29.7 | 13.4 | 16.3 |
| 1992 | 86.3 | 90.6 | 80.9 | 60.9 | 56.7 | 58.8 | 44.7 | 46.8 | 27.3 | 30.0 | 13.7 | 15.6 |
| 1993 | 86.7 | 91.2 | 82.7 | 60.9 | 58.9 | 61.0 | 48.4 | 48.8 | 27.3 | 29.8 | 16.1 | 13.6 |
| 1994 | 86.1 | 91.1 | 84.1 | 60.3 | 60.5 | 62.7 | 49.6 | 51.5 | 27.0 | 29.7 | 16.2 | 13.3 |
| 1995 | 86.9 | 92.5 | 86.8 | 57.2 | 62.2 | 64.6 | 52.0 | 50.3 | 28.4 | 31.2 | 17.8 | 15.5 |
| 1996 | 87.3 | 92.6 | 86.0 | 61.1 | 64.7 | 67.0 | 55.9 | 50.9 | 31.1 | 34.1 | 17.0 | 16.4 |
| 1997 | 87.4 | 92.9 | 86.9 | 61.8 | 65.4 | 68.2 | 53.7 | 53.9 | 31.8 | 35.2 | 16.4 | 17.8 |
| 1998 | 88.1 | 93.6 | 88.2 | 62.8 | 65.6 | 68.5 | 56.6 | 51.7 | 31.0 | 34.5 | 17.9 | 16.5 |

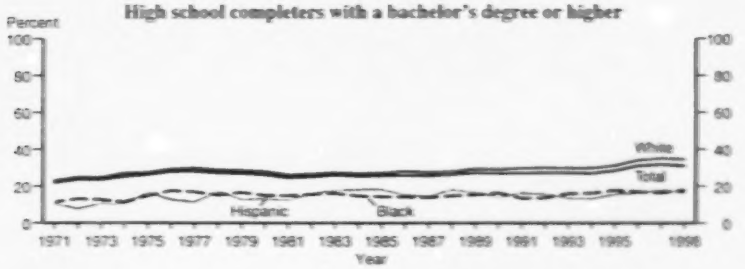
NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. Included in totals but not shown separately are other racial-ethnic groups.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

**Percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds who completed high school and percentage of high school completers with some college or a bachelor's degree or higher, by race–ethnicity: March 1971–98**




NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. Included in totals but not shown separately are other racial–ethnic groups.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

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